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EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES

the AVENGERS

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VICTORY IS MINE!

FATHER YMIR! HEAR ME!

AT LAST LOKI HAS BECOME WORTHY OF HIS FROST GIANT FOREBEARS!

I SHALL RULE WITH ICE AND IRON!

AND WOE TO THOSE WHO DO NOT BOW DOWN BEFORE ME!

FOR I, THY GOD, SHALL BE A JEALOUS GOD!

HA HA HA HA HA HA

*THE FIRST FROST GIANT -- Rachelle.

SHADOW VICTORY!

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES Stan Lee

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AND THE VOICE OF THE ROARING GIANT DOES NOT GO UNNOTICED...

...EVEN IN THE HEAT OF THE BATTLE!

PARTY'S *OVER*, CAP! OUR SIDE JUST *WON!*

WHAT? BY ODIN'S *BEARD!!*

THY STARTLEMENT BE THY *UNDOING!*

WHRAKK

NOW SHALT WE HAVE *REAVING* AND *WENCHING* A-PLENTY!

LOKI! 'TIS US! THE *ENCHANTRESS!*

AND *THOR!*

THE *GODS* OF THE NORTHMEN RULE *AGAIN!*

IN TRUTH, MY FORMER ALLIES...

HA HA HA

GAACK!

...LOKI HATH CONCLUDED THAT *MONOTHEISM* IS THE *BEST* POLICY!

ONE UNIVERSE! ONE *GOD!*

AND FOR THE *AVENGERS*, A LITTLE TASTE OF LOKI'S FORTHCOMING *MERCY*...

...TO WHET THINE APPETITES!

HA HA HA

BTHHHRAMM

NOW SHALL WE RESHAPE THE WORLD IN OUR *OWN* IMAGE!

ASGARD WITHOUT *ODIN!* LOKI NOW AND FOREVER!

HAHAHA

HIS *POWER* DOTH BEGGAR *DESCRIPTION!*

AND I *SENSE* THE *TRUTH* OF HIS WORDS!

WHATEVER WORLD I AM COME TO, THERE *IS* NO ASGARD...

...AND NO *ODIN!*

TRULY THE AVENGERS ARE MANKIND'S LAST HOPE!

I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT! HE'S BETRAYED US *ALL.*

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE, WANDA. HE'S *LOKI!*

BUT... CAP! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. HE GAVE ME WHAT I *WANTED.*

WELL, NOW HE'S TAKING IT AWAY.

THIS THOR'S STILL ALIVE, CAP.

SO ARE AMORA AND HAWKEYE. LET'S GET THEM INSIDE.

YOU MAY AS WELL COME TOO, WANDA.

YOU'VE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

THIS TIME, CAP, I THINK WE MAY HAVE MET OUR MATCH.

CAN THAT SORT OF TALK RIGHT NOW, THE AVENGERS'LL FIND A WAY.

HERE, ENCHANTRESS. THIS'LL HELP.

ONLY IF IT'S A REMEDY FOR SPRAINED PRIDE.

AND THEE, MY FOOLISH TWIN?

MINE HEAD BE SPLITTING, BUT EVEN MINE BELOVED MJOLNIR MAY NOT BE ENOUGH TO SPLIT LOKI'S HEAD AS I WISH.

WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER, BUT I NEVER DREAMED LOKI'S PLAN WOULD MAKE HIM SO *POWERFUL*.

WE ARE DOOMED.

THAT *CAN'T* BE TRUE!

SSSSS

YEEOOOW

KRAKOOOM

OH NO! THE MIRROR!

LOOK! THE SCARLET WITCH'S REFLECTION! IT'S HELLCAT!

BUT... WHAT DOES THAT *MEAN*?

THIS IS SOME *MAGIC* AT WORK!

FOR AN INSTANT, HELLCAT'S IMAGE HANGS MIDWAY BETWEEN THE SCARLET WITCH...

NOOOO!

...AND THE MIRROR!

THEN IT VANISHES INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE GLASS...

SKATTTTTER

...FOREVER!

WANDA! WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE'S HELLCAT?

LOKI... PUT HELLCAT IN MY BODY...

...WHEN I WENT TO WARN YOU.*

*AVENGERS WEST. -- Rachelle

SHE... COULDN'T... COME TO *TERMS* WITH HERSELF...

...BELIEVED HIS PROMISES...

...PAID THE PRICE.

I WAS INSIDE ALL THE TIME. I KNOW.

BUT... WHERE DOES THE CAT FIT IN?

IT'S MY GUARDIAN AGATHA HARKNESS'S FAMILIAR, EBONY.

BUT WHERE IS *AGATHA?*

SHE *IS* THE CAT! I KNOW A LOKI ENCHANTMENT WHEN I SEE ONE.

PH TZING

THANK YOU, AMORA! Oh, IT FEELS GOOD TO BE *FREE.*

I AM SORRY FOR HELLCAT, WANDA. BUT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY YOU COULD BE RELEASED.

WE ALL SHARE THE BLAME. I DON'T THINK ANY OF US EVEN REALIZED HELLCAT WAS *MISSING!*

NO WONDER SHE FELL FOR LOKI'S LURE.

BUT HAWKEYE? *CLINT!*

UGG! ACCK! GAAAH!

HIS BONDS HOLD HIM BUT SO DOES LOKI'S *MAGIC*. HIS SOUL BATTLES VALIANTLY...

...BUT IF I BREAK THE SPELL, I MAY DAMAGE HIM PERMANENTLY.

THEN WE'LL HAVE TO DO IT THE HARD WAY.

SO FAR, LOKI HAS TAKEN ALL THE TRICKS.

IT'S TIME WE CHANGED THE RULES OF THE GAME!

MEANWHILE, IN THE NEXT ROOM...

YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE I KNEW A LONG TIME AGO, THOR, IN ANOTHER *LIFE*, IF THAT'S POSSIBLE.

A WARRIOR... HERCULES... EXUBERANT, VERY BRAVE... *RECKLESS.*

WHAT GOOD BE A WARRIOR'S *RIGHT ARM* IF IT HANGETH *LIMP* AT HIS SIDE?

WHERE SMITETH THE *REAVING?* WHERE BE THE *BATTLE* TO MAKE *HEROES* OF US *ALL?*

DOTH EXUBERANCE SITTETH SO *BADLY* 'PON A GOD'S BROW? DOTH *RECKLESSNESS?*

THESE AVENGERS... THESE TIMES... THEY BE DULL BEYOND *BELIEF!*

YOU SEEK *REAVING?* YOU SEEK *BATTLE?*

THEN HOLD UP THY HAMMER...

...AND MEASURE THE *STRENGTH* OF THY *RIGHT* ARM...

...FOR THE METTLE OF THE AVENGERS IS ABOUT TO BE TESTED TO ITS *LIMITS*.

THE BATTLE AGAINST THIS DEADLY *LOKI* MAY CONSUME US *ALL*...

...AND THE *HAMMERS* OF THE *THUNDER GODS* ARE *NEEDED* AS NEVER BEFORE!

IF *BATTLE* IS THY *DESIRE*, BROTHER, THOU SHALT *HAVE* IT... *APLENTY!*

IRON MAN'S COME UP WITH A LIKELY SCENARIO.

THE KEY IS THE REACTOR ON AVENGERS ISLAND.

I'M GUESSING THAT AS LOKI ONCE TAPPED THE REACTOR'S ENERGY SOURCE TO CREATE OUR ENEMIES...

...NOW HE IS CHANNELING THAT ENERGY *HIMSELF*...

...AND HIS POWER IS STILL *GROWING*.

IF WE CAN'T *BREAK* THE CHANNEL, IT'S OVER.

"I MOVE WE ADJOURN TO THE REACTOR CONTAINMENT BUILDING ON AVENGERS ISLAND.

"IF THAT'S TRULY THE SOURCE OF LOKI'S POWER, THEN, THAT'S WHERE THE REAL BATTLE'S GOING TO BE FOUGHT!"

THIS GIGA-CAPACITOR WILL ABSORB MORE THAN 20 MILLION ERGS OF ENERGY BEFORE -- Huh?

CAP! WHAT'S THAT GLOWING FIELD AROUND THE REACTOR?

I DON'T KNOW, WASP, BUT I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF IT.

AMORA, IS THAT MORE OF LOKI'S HANDIWORK?

IT IS. HE'S ANTICIPATED A MOVE MIGHT BE MADE AGAINST THE SOURCE OF HIS POWER...

...AND PLACED AN UNBREAKABLE SHIELD AROUND IT.

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.

THOR?

SCFLAMMMGG

IT BE *IMPOSSIBLE!* NOTHING CAN RESISTETH THE ONSLAUGHT OF *MJOLNIR!* AND WE HAVE *TWO!*

I SHALL SUMMONETH A STORM FROM HEAVEN THAT WILL REND YON MAGIC FIELD TO *ATOMS!*

STAY THY HAND, BROTHER. SUCH UNLEASHED FURY MIGHT DESTROY MANHATTAN *ITSELF!*

OR *WORSE!* IT MIGHT EVEN RUPTURE THE ACTUAL REACTOR, AND IF REED RICHARDS'S ANALYSIS OF ITS TRUE NATURE IS CORRECT...*

...YOU COULD RIP OPEN THE *FLAW* IN THE FABRIC OF SPACE-TIME THE REACTOR REPRESENTS AND DESTROY THE *EARTH!*

WE'VE GOT TO BE *SMARTER* THAN THAT!

* LAST ISSUE --Rachelle

HA HA HA HA HA

RUN, MORTALS, RUN!

THY REALM... AND THY TIME...

...ARE THROUGH!

WHEN I AM FINISHED, THIS SQUALID CITY WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE GOLDEN MANSIONS OF THE GODS!

ASGARD WILL LIVE AGAIN...

.. WITH LOKI AS ITS LORD!

THAT WILL NEVER BE, EVIL ONE...

?

...FOR ASGARD IS A PLACE OF THE HEART...

...AND LOKI HAS NO HEART!

ODIN!

NO! THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!

I HAVE COME A LONG AND WEARY WAY TO *STOP* THEE, STEPSON!

MAYHAP *THIS* WILL CONVINCE YOU OF MY *REALITY!*

UGGH!

SKREEACKT

THOR'S *HAMMER?* BUT... WHAT OF *GUNGNIR?* WHERE IS THY UNERRING *SPEAR?*

AS YOU WELL KNOW, TRICKSTER, *MJOLNIR* IS THE MOST *POWERFUL* WEAPON OF THE GODS!

AND DIDST THOU NOT MAKE A *BARGAIN* WITH THY *STEPBROTHER* TO LET HIM CRUSH THY SKULL IF THOU *LIED* TO HIM?

THOU DIDST *LIE!*

-- Rachelle

I HAVE COME TO FULFILL HIS PART OF THE BARGAIN.

SKRAKKA!

NOOOO!

AND AS TWO TITANS CLASH IN THE HUDSON RIVER..

..THREE SMALL FIGURES WATCH FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE RUINED MANSION ON AVENGERS ISLAND.

THEY HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON...

THEY ARE ALL SORCERESSES!

LOKI'S POWER IS *INCREDIBLE!*

WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO *MATCH* HIM, MAGIC FOR MAG'C! WE'LL HAVE TO *CHOOSE* EACH MOMENT!

LOK 'S PREPARING TO STR KE AGAIN!

ENERGIZE ODIN! NOW!

AND AT THE REACTOR..

I'VE RECONFIGURED MY SUIT'S STORAGE CAPACITY. READY TO ROCK N' ROLL, AM GO.

THOU ART READY, Dr. PYM?

HANK, ARE YOU *SURE* YOU CAN HANDLE THIS?

I'VE GOT TO DO WHATEVER I CAN, CAN YOU KNOW THAT

MAYBE AFTER THIS, WE'LL TAKE A LITTLE EARLY RETIREMENT.

ALL SYSTEMS GREEN!

ODIN HAS TO HOLD OUT LONG ENOUGH TO START DEPLETING LOKI'S ENERGY SUPPLY.

IF WE CAN GET HIM TO OPEN UP HIS SHIELD, WE CAN SIPHON OFF ENOUGH ENERGY BETWEEN US TO PREVENT HIM FROM RECHARGING!

I FEAR OUR RUSE MAY NOT WORK *QUICKLY* ENOUGH. I TOO SHOULD JOIN IN THE BATTLE

YOU'RE IN THE BATTLE ALREADY, THOR

IF WE GET THAT SHIELD OPENED, EVERYTHING'S GOING TO HIT THE FAN.

WE *NEED* YOU, *HERE.*

THE SMELL OF OZONE FILLS THE AIR AS THE FURIOUS BATTLE CONTINUES...

...UNTIL...

THWAM!

UGGH!

AT LAST! ODIN HATH FALLEN!

I HAVE WRESTED VICTORY FROM THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF!

WHERE ARE THE VALKYRIES NOW, STEP-FATHER? WHERE IS THY VAUNTED ODINPOWER?

SHRAKKTHOOM

BETTER THOU SHOULDST ASK WHERE IS MJOLNIR!

FOR IT WILL SEEK THY LIFE EVEN BEYOND MY DEATH!

BLAM

ACK!

SHRAKK!

THAT... HURT! MY POWER WANES!

BUT ODIN IS SORELY WOUNDED! I MUST REPLENISH MY ENERGY AND DESTROY HIM BEFORE HE CAN RECOVER!

RAKTERARACK

THE SHIELD'S DOWN!

IRON MAN! ANTMAN! THOR! NOW!

ENERGY INTAKE TO THE HOX...

STORAGE NODES ACTIVATED!

SING, MJOLNIR, FOR THE LIFE OF EARTH!

IT'S WORKING! THEY'RE DIVERTING THE ENERGY FROM THE REACTOR!

HOW LONG BEFORE LOKI REALIZES IT?

"I'D SAY ALMOST IMMEDIATELY!"

?!?

TURN AGAIN, LOKI! ƷOOUGHƵ

OUR BATTLE... BE NOT YET FINISHED.

MY ENERGY SOURCE HATH BEEN *ABORTED!*

THOUGH MY POWER BE WEAKENED, THE ALL-FATHER MUST FALL 'ERE I LOSE *EVERYTHING!*

AAAARGH!!

KRAK

DIE, YOU ONE-EYED MONSTER! DIE!

STEAM ROILS INTO THE AIR ABOVE THE HUDSON AND SUDDENLY...

YOU FIGHTETH... WELL, STEP-BROTHER...

...BUT E'EN NOW, THE... ƷOOUGHƵ... BATTLE BE NOT OVER...

THOR! I HAVE BEEN *DUPED!* AND MY POWER GREATLY *DIMINISHED!*

BUT THE *DUNCE* COULD NOT HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THIS CHARADE *UNAIDED!*

WHOSOEVER DARETH TO *TRICK* THE *TRICKSTER* SHALL DIE *SWIFT* AND *TERRIBLE DEATHS*...

...AND I *KNOW* WHERE TO *FIND* THEM!

WHILE IN THE SHADOW OF AVENGERS MANSION...

THE SCARLET WITCH AND AGATHA HARKNESS HAVE FALLEN, EXHAUSTED FROM THEIR EFFORTS TO ENERGIZE THOR AND MAINTAIN THE [illegible]N...

...AND I TOO AM NEARLY SPENT.

BUT THE AVENGERS MUST BE WARNED!

JANET! YOU'VE GOT TO DELAY HIM, IF ONLY FOR A FEW SECONDS LONGER!

I LOVE YOU, DARLING!

AND I YOU!

BUT EVEN AS THE WASP SOARS OUT OF THE BUILDING...

KARWROOOUMM

TAKE HEED! THOR HATH FALLEN...

...AND LOKI APPROACHES AT SPEED!

THE MANSION! IT'S COMPLETELY BLOWN AWAY!

AH HA! I KNEW IT COULD ONLYETH BE THE AVENGERS!

I SHOULDST HAVE KILLED YOU DEMONS FIRST!

BUT THERE BE NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT!

DESPAIRETH AND DIE!

PREPARETH TO --

ARRGH!

MINE EAR!

WHAT *FIEND* HATH -- *AHA!* THE *WASP* DOTH IMITATETH HER [redacted] *STING!*

ZAPTT

THEN DIE LIKE THE INSECT THOU *BE!*

JAN! THIS IS HANK! GET AWAY FROM HIM! NOW!

THOU CANST NOT FLY FAR ENOUGH TO EVADE MY *WRATH*, ME BEAUTY!

I SHALL SCALDETH THE VERY AIR UNTIL --

...UHHH...

WHAT -?

THOOOM

AERRKK!

AND FAR ABOVE THE CLOUDS...

HE'S STILL MOVING, COLONEL FURY! LASER BATTERIES RECHARGED AND READY!

HOLD YER FIRE!

PYM! S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICARRIER CAN'T DO ANY MORE! HE'S TOO CLOSE TO YOU!

THEN IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S UP TO ME!

WHAT? THOU THINKEST TO STOP LOKI ALONE?

I SHALL TEARETH THINE LIVING HEART FROM THINE CHEST 'ERE I RESTETH!

I'VE CUT BIGGER MEN THAN YOU DOWN TO SIZE, MISTER...

...AND IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ALREADY SHRINKING TO ME.

THKWACK

HAVE YOU NOTICED? YOUR VOCABULARY'S GOING DOWNHILL BIG TIME!

CAP! JUMP CLEAR!

WE'RE FULLY CHARGED!

MJOLNIR *BURNS* WITH NUCLEAR *FIRE!* MAY *ODIN* GUIDE MY ARM!

I'M GLOWING RED HOT! REVERSING ENERGY CHANNEL! *NOW!*

NOOOOO!

THE UNLEASHED FURY ENGULFS THE STAGGERING FIGURE.

FOR A MOMENT, LOKI GLOWS AS BRIGHTLY AS A DYING STAR.

AND THEN IS GONE.

BUT THERE ARE NO SHOUTS OF VICTORY...

...FOR NO VICTORY OF MEANING IS EVER ACHIEVED WITHOUT COST...

...AND THE COST CAN BE HIGH.

MY BROTHER!

}COUGH! LOKI?

HE IS *VANQUISHED*. THOU HAST SAVED THE WORLD.

IT IS... }COUGH!... A GOOD WAY FOR A GOD... }COUGH! TO DIE...

...IS IT NOT, BROTHER?

MAYHAP... I EARN... }COUGH!... A SEAT IN... VALHALLA...

IF THERE IS JUSTICE, BROTHER...

...YOU WILL SIT AT ODIN'S TABLE BESIDE HAROKIN AND ELIF AND SKURGE AND THE REST OF THE HEROES THIS VERY NIGHT.

MY BROTHER. MY WORTHY BROTHER.

EPILOGUE...

ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL ON THE WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN...

I'M DEEPLY ASHAMED, CAP.

OF WHAT I DID. OF WHAT I ALMOST BECAME.

HOW CAN I FACE THE OTHERS AFTER THIS?

CLINT, IT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO ANY OF US.

THERE'S *NOTHING* YOU COULD DO AGAINST LOKI'S MAGIC.

MAYBE NOT. BUT IF I HADN'T WANTED YOUR JOB SO BADLY...

...IF I HADN'T BEEN SO BLINDLY *ARROGANT*...

...MAYBE I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SUCH AN EASY TARGET.

THAT'S MORE THAN ANY OF US CAN KNOW, HAWKEYE. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED...

...AND I SPEAK FOR US *ALL*...

...YOU'RE STILL AN AVENGER AND YOU'D BETTER GET WELL FAST, HAWKEYE!

YOUR SICK LEAVE'S ABOUT USED UP.

I'LL BE READY, CAP...

...AND I'LL BE WEARING THE COSTUME LOKI MADE FOR ME...

...TO REMIND ME OF MY MOST BITTER FAILURE...

...UNTIL I MAKE *GOOD*.

COUNT ON IT, I'LL BE *READY*.

NEXT SHADOW'S END! ...WHEREIN ALL THINGS COME TO DUST

BE HERE